

Boston 1794
A
S E R M O N

DELIVERED AT THE
O R D I N A T I O N
O F T H E
REV. JOHN THORNTON KIRKLAND

TO THE PASTORAL CARE
O F T H E
NEW SOUTH CHURCH AND CONGREGATION
I N B O S T O N ,
F E B R U A R Y 5th, 1794.

BY DAVID TAPPAN, A. M. *K*

Professor of Divinity in Harvard College.

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S E R M O N

DELIVERED AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

REV. JOHN THORNTON KIRKLAND

TO THE PASTORAL CARE

OF THE

NEW SOUTH-WEST COAST ASSOCIATION

ON

1841



BY DAVID TAPPAN, A.M.

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A N

ORDINATION SERMON.

ACTS XXVI. 25.

AND HE SAID I AM NOT MAD, MOST NOBLE FESTUS ; BUT
SPEAK FORTH THE WORDS OF TRUTH AND SOBERNESS.

SAIN**T** Paul, that illustrious champion of the christian cause, scarce ever appears in a more graceful and dignified attitude, than in his occasional addresses to the great men of his time in defence of the gospel. This observation is eminently verified by his apology before King *Agrippa* in the preceding part of this chapter. His speech on this occasion is one of the most finished models of insinuating, yet manly eloquence. It displays to great advantage the scholar, the gentleman, the christian, and the Apostle. After paying to the King a tribute of respect equally honest and engaging, he gives him a plain and artless narrative of his own life ; of his strict and devout conversation, while a Jewish Pharisee ; of his zealous opposition to christianity, and persecution of its votaries, in conformity to an erroneous and perverted judgment ; of his extraor-

dinary conversion to the faith of Jesus, and commission to teach and propagate it both among Jews and Gentiles; and of his consequent labors and sufferings in his Master's service.

This modest and serious, yet highly interesting and wonderful account is rudely interrupted by Festus, the Roman Governor of Judea; who loudly exclaims, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." As if he had said, "Paul, thy extravagant discourse concerning the sufferings and resurrection of one Jesus, his appearance and commission to thee at Damascus, and the light and salvation which the world is to receive from his doctrine, is evidently the offspring of an overheated and distracted brain, produced by too intense study of the ancient prophecies and traditions of thy nation."

The text is part of the Apostle's reply to this ungrounded and indecent charge; I AM NOT MAD, MOST NOBLE FESTUS; BUT SPEAK FORTH THE WORDS OF TRUTH AND SOBERNESS. What inexpressible beauty and grandeur surround this temperate, polite, yet resolute answer! What a delicate and exalted triumph does the prisoner at the bar obtain over the insolent madness of his accuser on the bench of judgment! And what an excellent pattern is here presented to the ordinary professors and ministers of the gospel, especially at a period, when too many are found attacking christianity, and its faithful adherents, with as little candor or decorum, as was exhibited by their noble Predecessor!

It will not therefore be deemed foreign from the present occasion, if we distinctly mark both the matter and the spirit of Paul's defence in the text, and apply them as a general directory for all, who are employed in teaching or defending the gospel.

The matter of the Apostle's reply amounts to a denial of the charge of madness, and a declaration that his preceding story was founded in sober truth. The original word translated SOBERNESS precisely signifies SOUNDNESS OF MIND, and stands directly opposed to the mental distraction imputed to the speaker. The words of truth and soberness, therefore, intend the declarations of a sound understanding and an honest heart; declarations equally pure from fraud, absurdity, or frantic delusion.

But what evidence have we that Paul's account of his conversion and apostolic function, as well as his general doctrine, agrees with this description; that it is not the result either of wild enthusiasm, or of wicked imposture? The question is proper and momentous, and has an intimate connexion with the solemnity before us. For the extraordinary history and excellent writings of this Apostle compose more than half of the New Testament; and while the former presents a short and convincing proof of the divine truth and power of the gospel, the latter display its peculiar doctrines in a light far more complete and glorious than any other part of the christian canon. The ministrations, therefore, of our religious teachers, as well as the evangelical exercises, comforts, and hopes of their faithful hearers, must be peculiarly

indebted, under God, to his apostolic labors, and therefore must be deeply interested in the question before us. We likewise claim a special relation to Paul, as the prime minister of Christ to the Gentile nations. On this ground we, as the offspring of heathen ancestors, view ourselves as a part of his peculiar charge, and our christian ministers as his successors and sons in the gospel. While, therefore, we feel a sacred obligation to yield a filial respect to the instructions and example of this our APOSTOLIC FATHER, we feel ourselves equally concerned to vindicate his character from the imputation of falsehood and madness.

Now that Paul really spoke the words of truth and soberness in the account presented in this chapter, and in the general series of his preaching and writings, is evident from many topics of argument.

In his address to King Agrippa, viewed in connexion with a preceding similar speech to his countrymen, we find him openly asserting a train of facts, and appealing to the whole nation of the Jews, to their chief priests and elders, and finally to his royal judge, for their undeniable truth. The principal facts related were so circumstanced, that their truth or falsehood must have been certainly and generally known. His former rage against christianity, and his sudden conversion to it, with the leading events, which produced, accompanied, and followed that conversion, must, according to his own narration, have been matters of great notoriety. If, therefore, his account had been false, the cheat must have

been quickly detected and crushed by the combined testimony of his companions in the memorable journey to Damascus, of the family in which he first lodged in that city, of the person who is mentioned as the instrument of miraculously restoring his sight, and conferring upon him extraordinary powers in the name of the Lord Jesus, and of those, in general, who saw and heard him after the date of his pretended conversion. Would an impostor of common understanding have openly risked his cause and his life on a story, the falsity of which must have been instantly exposed? Would he have confidently appealed to the tribunal of the public, yea, of his powerful accusers and judges, for its manifest truth? Would he have renewed this appeal many years after the commencement of his imposture, when his numerous and sagacious foes had long enjoyed every desirable advantage for discovering and defeating it? And would a well informed judge and king have implicitly allowed the truth of his account, and the justice of his appeal, and been almost persuaded by them to embrace his pretended revelation? The plain sense of every sober man instantly puts its negative on these questions. Our Apostle then could not be guilty of deliberate fraud.

Let us now see whether his conduct can be rationally imputed to enthusiastic madness. But this supposition is immediately confuted by the superior wisdom, calmness, and decency of his language and behavior on this and other trying occasions, as well as by the general complexion of his actions and writings;

which display an extent of knowledge, a soundness of judgment, a prudence and delicacy of address, a spirit of humility, condescension and charity, totally incompatible with the uniform features of fanatic delusion.

We add that a spirit of enthusiasm must operate on the imagination of its subject conformably to his present sentiments and passions. Now the ideas, affections, and prejudices of Paul, when he went to Damascus, were strongly opposed to christianity; and the extirpation of this hated religion was the favorite object of his journey. If in such a posture of mind his imagination had presented to him a celestial vision, it must have been of such a complexion, as smiled upon his present enterprise, and crowned it with the extraordinary benediction of heaven. A vision, therefore, condemning his persecution of the christians, and leading him instantly to abjure his former principles and conduct, and to profess and teach a religion, which, to that moment, he had been eager to destroy, must have originated, not from the power of fancy, but from a diviner source.

We may also ask those free-thinkers, who, with Festus, ascribe this preternatural appearance to the force of a distempered brain; we may ask them, whether the phrensy of one man could instantly communicate its contagion to a considerable number of fellow travellers, so as to delude even their bodily senses, at noon-day, into the fancied sight of an extraordinary, overpowering glory, sufficient to strike them all to the ground with amazement and terror? We may

further ask, could such a wild illusion inspire the mind of Paul with such a sober and excellent system of doctrine, as he afterwards preached? Could it give his preaching and epistles that transcendent authority and success, with which they were attended? Could it endow him with supernatural gifts and powers, and enable him instantly to communicate them to others? It might possibly, indeed, invest him with the imaginary possession of these flattering prerogatives; but his first attempt to exert them must have cured the pleasing delirium, or at least have exposed his pretensions to utter contempt.

The conclusion, therefore, which forces itself upon us is, that Paul's account in this chapter is a true and sober statement of facts, and consequently that the christian religion is a divine revelation.*

* There are but two ways, in which infidelity can possibly avoid this conclusion in favor of the gospel. One is, by pleading that the events which happened to Paul at Damascus, though admitted to be facts, were not a direct and full proof of christianity, nor a sufficient reason for his hasty conversion to it. But let it be considered that these facts were not only supernatural, but divine attestations to the mission and doctrine of Christ. For, in the first place, Paul and his company saw a *heavenly light* or *shining cloud*, which among the Jews was the known symbol of JEHOVAH's presence, and was styled the *Shechinah*, or the *glory of the Lord*. Accordingly, they all fell on their faces, not only through terror, but as an usual token of respect to such a divine manifestation. Secondly, Paul saw a glorious human form in this cloud, and heard a voice issuing from it, which assured him that the person thus appearing and speaking was Jesus of Nazareth, and that the opposition then made to christianity was a persecution of himself. Thus Paul had sensible demonstration of the presence and divine glory of the risen Redeemer, and of the truth and divinity of his gospel. Thirdly, he was struck blind by this glorious light, and, in answer to his prayer to Jesus of Nazareth, was miraculously cured by one of his disciples sent to him for that purpose. Fourthly, his understanding was supernaturally inspired with a complete knowledge of the christian doctrine; his heart was wonderfully changed by its influence; and

If we now direct our attention to the general DOCTRINE of christianity, as preached by this Apostle, and the other extraordinary ministers of the gospel, we find it admirably corresponding with the description before us. We behold in it a system of truths rational and practical, interesting and sublime. It harmonizes with the best dictates of our own un-

his baptism into this new religion was attended with an extraordinary effusion of the Holy Ghost, preparing him to preach, confirm, and defend the gospel in the most convincing and successful manner. Surely this aggregate of divine testimonies in favor of christianity was abundantly sufficient to convince any rational mind of its heavenly original. The evidence which our religion derives from the extraordinary conversion of Paul will strike us with additional force, if we attend to his character, situation, and prospects, before that event; his superior sense and learning, integrity and devotion; his popularity and influence among the Jews; his remarkable attachment to their religion, and incredulity respecting the christian; of consequence, his vast sacrifices both of a worldly and religious nature, and voluntary exposure of himself to the most terrible evils, by professing and preaching the gospel. To all which we may add his ardent, laborious and persevering zeal in this new profession, joined with constant proofs of an excellent understanding and heart; together with the serene fortitude, elevation, and joy inspired by his religion amid extraordinary trials both in life and in death. These circumstances, combined with the unparalleled credit and happy effects of his doctrine in his own and succeeding generations, furnish the most illustrious and satisfactory proof of the truth and power of the gospel.

The only resource, therefore, left to the opposers of revelation is the plea, that these pretended facts relative to Paul are an *after forgery*. But, not to insist on the common and just observation, that this pretence sets aside every principle, by which ancient facts and writings can be authenticated, it may suffice to remark that it involves the absurd and incredible supposition, that within about a century after Christ's ascension a very large proportion of the christian churches were made to believe that they were originally planted by the preaching and miracles of Paul, and had received from him extraordinary gifts and inspired letters, when there was no foundation in truth for such a belief; yea, that the whole christian world was deluded into a persuasion that it had possessed, from the beginning, an authentic history of the conversion, travels and successful labors of this Apostle, written by his contemporary Luke, when it could not but know that it had never seen nor heard of such a history, till the supposed forgery appeared!

derstandings. It suits the various exigencies of our lapsed condition. It confirms the wishes, hopes, and fears of nature, by annexing pardon to repentance, a future reward to sincere though imperfect holiness, and final misery to impenitent vice. It at once enlightens and purifies, humbles and consoles, strengthens and exalts the mind of man. This excellent spirit, this ennobling and comforting operation of the christian doctrine, and its wonderful agreement with the most refined sentiments and feelings of the virtuous heart, are an internal and most delightful evidence of its truth. This evidence is exceedingly heightened by the apparent candor, simplicity and goodness of the writers of the New Testament, and by the general meanness of their previous condition, education, and capacities, compared with the striking grandeur, originality, and perfection of the system, which their writings unfold.

The peculiar MODE, in which the gospel communicates its instruction, is equally accommodated to the present state of man with the doctrine itself. It teaches and enforces its truths, not by nice philosophical explications and reasonings, which few could understand, but by plain and striking facts; by such facts as not only prove the divine mission of the teacher, and thus give his message a peculiar authority and influence over the human mind, but also exemplify his doctrines in a familiar and visible manner. It presents spiritual truths to the senses and imaginations of men, not only by dressing them in imagery borrowed from sensible objects, but by giv-

ing them a present or anticipated existence in visible examples. Thus it exemplifies the power of Christ to forgive sins by the open exercise of that power in delivering men from the sensible penal effects of transgression. It illustrates his ability and readiness to cure the most inveterate diseases of the mind, and to emancipate it from the tyranny of satan, by his miraculously healing analogous and equally obstinate distempers of the body, and releasing it from the power of malignant spirits. It confirms the great doctrine of the final resurrection by instances of dead persons restored to life. It illustrates and ascertains the future glorious resurrection and reward of the faithful by the public triumphant rising and ascension of their Head, and by his repeated appearances in his glorified humanity to several of his primitive ministers. It clothes even the nature and perfections of the DEITY with a kind of visible body, in the person, character, and works of his Son; insomuch that the discourses and miracles of the Savior, joined with the leading traits of his temper and deportment, are an express representation, a mild and softened refulgence of the divine glory. It elucidates and enforces its moral precepts by the perfect life of its Founder, which was at once a familiar exhibition of the moral excellence of God, and a complete and most engaging pattern of those virtues, which adorn and consummate the character of man.

As the internal constitution of christianity exhibits such genuine characters of divine wisdom and benevolence; so its external evidence is a plain and

convincing appeal to all sober and honest inquirers. When, in the glass of authentic gospel history, we see the Author of our religion, by one powerful word, calming the boisterous elements, and giving sight, health, life, to the blind, the sick, and the dead, we behold exertions of the same power and sovereign dominion, which created and governs the world; and thus have sensible demonstration both that there is a God, and that the christian revelation is his offspring. When we contemplate the vast system of prophecy displayed in the Bible, a system which embraces the general train of events from the beginning to the end of the world, and see many branches of it exactly accomplished; we have a visible proof both that the volume of scripture and the events of the universe are the work of one all-comprehending mind, and meet in one harmonious and mighty plan, and that the remaining parts of the prophetic scheme, which respect the future scenes of time and of eternity, will, in their proper order, be punctually verified.

Having considered the matter of Paul's declaration, let us see how far it concerns christian ministers in general, especially those of the present age.

To vindicate and recommend the gospel as a rational and divine system must ever be a main branch of the ministerial function. A singular combination of circumstances renders a careful attention to this object peculiarly seasonable and momentous at the present day. The revival and progress of free inquiry, of human and divine science, of civil and sacred liberty, have, in many instances, been accompanied with

a hasty and extreme contempt of established religious opinions and forms as superstitious or fanatical, and by too easy a transition, of the christian religion and priesthood in general, as the production either of cunning ambition or of enthusiastic folly. This unhappy feature eminently marks the present countenance of a great part of the old world, and begins to be visible in the face of the new. To this we may add, the late prosperous state of our country has, by furnishing the means, given birth and nourishment to an excessive taste for worldly splendor, amusement, and sensual indulgence, and to various forms of impiety and corruption; and thus, by natural consequence, has produced a vigorous and too successful effort to conform the religious and moral principles of the age to its proud and vicious propensities. It is, therefore, of peculiar importance that the clergy of the present day should possess an accurate and familiar acquaintance with the ground on which they stand, with the nature, evidence, and mutual connexion of natural and revealed religion; that they may be able to explain, defend and enforce them to the greatest advantage. Now as the religion of nature is best supported by appealing to the manifest constitution and course of things in the system around us; so perhaps the most easy and successful method of defending christianity, at least of satisfying or silencing the bulk of inquirers, is by appealing to present notorious facts. I humbly conceive that the whole evidence of revealed religion may be happily reduced to this single topic. For

Why do we credit the testimony of those witnesses, who have published the extraordinary facts of the gospel? It is because our own consciousness and daily observation assure us of the credibility of human testimony so circumstanced, and of the safety and necessity of acting upon it in our most weighty concerns. From what we constantly feel in ourselves, and observe in others, we know that it is incompatible with human nature voluntarily to profess, act, and suffer, as many thousands of christian converts did in the first days of the gospel, unless they were certain of its miraculous proofs. The present existence and reputation of the evangelic history so many ages after its first publication, and the many monuments of its truth still subsisting among us, are standing public attestations of its claim to our belief. The existence of a christian Sabbath, and of a sacramental feast, in memory of the crucified and risen Savior, and of a select order of men to feed and rule his flock, can never be accounted for on any other principle than the truth of those facts, which these institutions proclaim.

If the evidence of ancient scriptural facts may be thus resolved into present appearances, much more may the proof arising from prophecy. When we behold the obvious agreement of the present, as well as past state of the church and world with the predictions of the Bible, particularly, with respect to the singular character and state of the Jews, the extraordinary preservation of the christian interest, the decline and fast approaching destruction of Antichrist, and the

manifest preparations of divine providence for a future more glorious epoch in the history of man ; we have, as was hinted above, a sensible demonstration of the divinity both of those prophetic representations, and of the general system to which they belong.

The present existence and beneficent influence of christianity in a considerable part of the world, compared with the fate and success of other institutions in ancient or modern times, are another standing proof of its divine original : for no other adequate cause can be assigned either for its first and general reception, its permanent establishment, or its unrivalled efficacy in meliorating the religious, moral, and civil state of mankind.

Finally, the existence of the Bible itself is another important fact, which proclaims its divinity. For the aspect of this book, at first view, is peculiar and noble. Its narrations, characters, and whole texture have the natural air of truth. Its style or manner, like that of the volume of creation, possesses a simplicity, an unaffected charm and majesty, which have never been equalled. The plainness and particularity of its history ; the circumstantial variations, yet important agreement of its writers ; their conspicuous humility, integrity, benevolence, and piety, compared with their solemn pretensions to a divine commission ; above all, the character of Jesus Christ as drawn in the New Testament ; a character so original and so perfect, that the simple and unlettered penmen could not of themselves have imagined any thing like it, much less have uniformly supported its

dignity, and therefore must have copied it from real life; a character, whose whole complexion is remote from every appearance both of enthusiasm and imposture; the singular matter, spirit, and dress of our Savior's discourses, joined with the finished scheme of truth and duty delivered by him and his Apostles; these, and many other facts, involved in the existence of the Bible, constantly appeal to our understandings and hearts for its truth and divinity.

As christianity at large may thus be easily supported by pointing the senses, reason, and moral feelings of men to a train of present appearances; so its leading doctrines, duties, and sanctions may be best recommended and enforced by similar methods, or by representations, which, as far as the subject will admit, carry in them an appeal to the sound dictates, or the evident experience of the human mind. Permit me modestly to illustrate this remark by particular examples.

The gospel supposes and asserts the condition of our fallen nature to be a state of deplorable ignorance, corruption, and guilt; a state, in which natural light and mere law can neither satisfy the inquiring mind, relieve the accusing conscience, nor purify the corrupted heart. This representation of human depravity and misery is the basis of the evangelical scheme of mercy. But it is not peculiar to revelation. It is matter of constant experience and observation. It is sanctioned by the universal history of man. It is echoed by the plaintive acknowledgments of the best human characters. The christian minister, therefore,

will carefully state and enforce this humiliating truth, and thus hold up to the consciences of his hearers a faithful mirror, in which every description of human sinners may see its own likeness, and be properly alarmed and humbled at the sight. At the same time he will aim at such a sober representation of human nature, as may neither impeach the moral character of its author, nor contradict the voice of daily experience; as may not seem to injure or to leave out a great part of mankind, or to discourage convicted distressed offenders from seeking needed and offered relief.

That God has sent his ONLY BEGOTTEN SON into our world, to enlighten and reform, to comfort and save it, is another most important truth delivered in the gospel, a truth which constitutes its distinguishing glory. The sacred writers plainly assert the divine dignity of the Savior, his real and miraculous incarnation, the atoning virtue of his obedience and death, his glorious exaltation, and his important offices as Teacher and Advocate, as Ruler and Judge of the world. It becomes the christian minister to present these doctrines in their native scriptural dress, in their weighty practical import; not as a curious chain of metaphysical speculations, but as interesting facts plainly declared in the inspired history, and forming a grand scheme of providence for accomplishing the most glorious and benevolent purposes. The air of wonderful incomprehensible grandeur, or of unfathomable counsel and operation, which surrounds these facts, gives them a more striking corre-

pendence to the general nature and works of the infinite Being, as well as to the exigences of apostate man, which required an instructor, a reformer, a reconciling sacrifice, far superior to any which the world had previously known.

The restoration of our disordered minds to moral harmony, purity and joy by the agency of a DIVINE SANCTIFIER AND COMFORTER, is another branch of this revealed plan of providence. In explaining this momentous point the sober instructor will place the necessity, the manner, and the fruits of this supernatural agency in a light, which may give it a most rational and comforting aspect; which may encourage the humble activity of the creature, while it fixes his dependence on the proffered gracious influence of the Creator.

In stating and enforcing the duties of christianity the evangelical teacher will point out their intimate connexion with its doctrines. He will show that these duties, even such of them as are most peculiar, immediately result from those facts or relations, which the gospel reveals, and in this view are necessary branches of moral virtue or natural obligation; and consequently that the serious and fervent practice of them is requisite both to evidence and promote a truly honest and excellent character. On this ground he will illustrate the essential fitness and importance of supreme love to God, cordial faith in the Messiah, grateful submission to the sanctifying Spirit, humble and repentance for sin, tender and beneficent love to one another, constant ardor, elevation, an

the pursuit and prospect of christian perfection and glory. He will justify inward vital christianity, in its highest exercises and enjoyments, from the imputation of weakness or phrenzy, by the unspeakable magnitude of its objects and motives, as well as by the peculiar condition and frame of its subjects, whose affections, as well as understandings, may with reason be supremely engaged by such suitable, interesting, and glorious discoveries as the gospel presents. On the same principles will he vindicate the zeal of faithful ministers in pressing these truths and duties on their fellow sinners and christians. In a word, he will show that every part of gospel morality is rational and noble, and directly conducive to our present and future felicity. He will represent even the ceremonial duties of our religion as expressive signs and powerful instruments of good moral dispositions, as well as important to the existence of a visible church and of public christian worship, which are so beneficial to the civil and moral state of human society, and so necessary to the nurture and preparation of individuals for a nobler and happier existence.

Finally, he will represent the sanctions of the gospel, drawn from a future endless retribution, as but a louder echo to the voice of natural equity, of common reason and experience, and as benevolently intended to seize the most powerful springs of human nature, and engage them in the cause of virtue and morality.

Being largely contemplated the matter of ministry, let us briefly advert to the SPIRIT or

MANNER, in which it should be performed. Of this we have a noble pattern in the text. The several beauties of this model should be studiously copied by all succeeding ministers.

Like Paul, they should be examples of christian CIVILITY. As he gives to Festus the honorary title of his office, and addresses him in a style of decent and manly respect; so it becomes his successors carefully to exhibit, in their social intercourse, the courteous spirit of their religion, by treating the various classes of men agreeably to the innocent forms of civil decorum, and preserving on all occasions that mild, humble, unaffected dignity, which will neither flatter the greatest, nor trample upon the lowest of human beings.

With this should be united a certain INDEPENDENT FIRMNESS AND MAGNANIMITY. As Paul's single aim was to honor his master and save the souls of men, so the grandeur of his object communicated an habitual elevation to his sentiments and conduct, and rendered them nobly superior to all worldly considerations. The prospect or experience of ridicule, persecution, or the greatest temporal evils, far from damping, rather gave new vigor to his christian heroism. Unawed by the presence or opposite principles of an august and brilliant auditory, in which a King presided, he gives them the same honest account of his conversion and doctrine, which he had before delivered to the Jewish populace, and with steady courage maintains the truth, when reproached and derided by a Governor. The same greatness of soul marks

his behavior before Felix, when called to address him as a christian preacher. Instead of gratifying his curious taste, or courting his applause and protection, though his temporal freedom and comfort were in his power, he with equal dexterity and magnanimity points out the evil of those vices, to which that Magistrate was notoriously addicted, enforces his admonitions by the terrors of a judgment to come, and applies his subject with such authority, as to make Felix tremble on the seat of judgment! What a glorious pattern for the clergy of the present day! A considerable portion of the same independent and resolute spirit is essential, to their fidelity. Without it they will be apt to keep back unpalatable truths and duties however important, and to spare the favorite vices of their hearers, especially of those, on whose smiles their temporal circumstances chiefly depend.

But this inflexible firmness must ever be tempered with BENIGNITY AND LOVE. The courage of our Apostle was the effect, not of a fierce unfeeling temper, but of tender and ardent good-will to his brethren of mankind. What an effusion of generous and glowing benevolence is his reply to King Agrippa, who had professed himself almost persuaded to become a christian, I WOULD TO GOD, THAT NOT ONLY THOU, BUT ALSO ALL THAT HEAR ME THIS DAY WERE BOTH ALMOST AND ALTOGETHER SUCH AS I AM EXCEPT THESE BONDS! Nothing can be more congenial or more essential to the employment of a christian minister than this fervent charity. This will animate and sweeten, recommend and enforce

his public and private labors, will draw forth his condescending pastoral offices to the young, the poor, and afflicted of his flock and studiously accomodate his ministrations to their various capacities, tempers, and conditions. Which leads us to add that

PRUDENCE is another striking trait in the description of a gospel teacher. Saint Paul ever paid a wise and delicate attention to the proper decorum and dignity of his character. To this end he maintained a strict discipline over his passions which were naturally ardent, nicely attended to characters, places, and circumstances, and skilfully adapted himself to the diversified prejudices and infirmities of mankind, that by these handles, he might, if possible, draw them over to the standard of Christ. His sedate and wise deportment recorded in this chapter, his delicate and masterly address to the Athenians, his accommodating behavior both to Jews and Gentiles, to the weak and the strong, furnish a very instructive example of that laudable ministerial prudence, which aims to please men in order to profit them, which by honorable condescensions and sacrifices seeks general favor and esteem merely as an engine of extensive usefulness, while it scorns those versatile popular arts, which sacrifice the approbation of God and of conscience to the idol of unmerited human applause.

With this prudence should be joined a WELL TEMPERED ZEAL for christianity and its important truths. This eminently distinguishes Paul's defence in this chapter, as well as the whole tenor of his ministerial conduct. His zeal every where burns and

shines ; but, it is with a clear and gentle flame. The most insolent or cruel attacks from the enemies of the gospel could not provoke him to bitter recrimination. He employs no other weapons to defend and propagate his master's cause, but those of instruction, argument, and persuasion, enforced by an exemplary christian life. Happy had it been for the church and the world if the christian priesthood, and other defenders of the faith, had always contented themselves with the same mode of procedure ! Our religion, far from either needing or countenancing, condemns and spurns all intolerant and compulsory measures. She requires her public officers indeed, to support her cause with earnestness and vigor ; but at the same time with that noble moderation and tenderness, which suit her genius and principles, which are due to her more decent or wavering opposers, and which prudence and compassion demand even to her scoffing and virulent foes.

In a word, a SOBLIME SPIRIT OF CHRISTIAN PIETY is the crowning feature in the character before us. Paul's heart was subjected to the gospel and acquainted with its important blessings, before he was sent forth to preach it to others. This intimate and comforting knowledge of its nature and value gave a superior lustre and energy to his addresses, and spread over his whole life a favor of rational, fervent, and elevated piety. There is no qualification so important to a gospel minister as a high degree of personal religion. This will enable him to delineate and recommend christianity to others in a just and

engaging light. It will clothe the composition and delivery of his public discourses with a natural warmth and solemnity, equally remote from cold speculation or artificial parade on the one hand, and from a blind and turbulent zeal on the other. At the same time it will render his private deportment in the view of his family and flock a continual transcript and enforcement of his public ministrations.

What an excellent pattern is here to direct the preparatory studies and views of young gentlemen, who contemplate the christian ministry as their future profession !

It is of vast importance, my friends, that you lay a firm and adequate foundation for the high employment before you. Study closely, then, the great evidences, principles, and obligations of religion, as exhibited both by nature and revelation. Let your belief of these truths be rational and your acquaintance with them comprehensive, experimental, and practical. Lay open your hearts, as well as understandings, to the pure and elevating influence of the christian system. Let your motives in undertaking to preach it comport with its heavenly origin, constitution and end. Let not the views of secular interest or distinction, of popular fame, nor even of refined mental entertainment, or literary eminence, draw you to this holy profession. If you embrace it on such principles, your conduct will not be marked either with truth or sobriety. The spirit of the office is violated, and its dignity betrayed by the unworthy

views and behavior of those, who thus presumptuously invade it. Certainly characters of eminent seriousness and integrity, firmness and zeal, as well as knowledge and prudence, are required to recommend and promote christianity, and to bear down the sophistry and ridicule of its adversaries, in this enlightened, sceptical, and dissolute age. You will therefore, my young brethren, deliberately count the cost of this employment, as well as duly appreciate the honor and pleasure, the personal improvement, the present usefulness, and future reward, which are connected with its able and faithful execution.

In these observations, my dear Sir, I have the pleasure of expressing your sentiments, as well as my own. Our late intimate connexion at a neighboring university has given me access to your general ideas and feelings respecting the christian religion and ministry, as well as a lively interest in every event, which concerns either your happiness or usefulness. I felicitate you on the distinguished honor which providence has done you in crowning your probationary services from the desk with the early voice of general approbation, and in directing the first destitute society which has had the opportunity of enjoying them to so united an election of you to the pastoral office. I congratulate you that your destined lot is cast in this ancient and respectable metropolis, which concentrates so large a portion of American learning and information, refinement and magnificence. At the same time your situation here, with its pleasures and advantages will combine some peculiar and

delicate trials, which will give ample exercise, both to your prudence and virtue. To enjoy the decent pleasures, to improve the advantages, and surmount the temptations of this populous and elegant town in a manner becoming the christian minister, will require a great share of that divine philosophy, which is learned only in the school of Christ. By daily and devoutly conversing with the sublime truths, examples, and prospects which his gospel presents, and keeping in realizing view the grand and interesting design of the christian ministry, you will be able, through divine grace, to maintain the spirit of your station and to carry it not only into your public exhibitions, but into the more private and cheerful scenes of life. This will place you on a secure and noble eminence above the infectious and corrupting influence of earthly splendor, wealth or amusement. At the same time it will enable you to enjoy every proper source of entertainment in a manner truly rational and refined. It will also prompt and direct your tender and assiduous efforts to remove the veil from the eyes of those, who are blinded and enslaved by the glittering trifles of this world, and bring them to perceive and embrace the divine and immortal happiness, which christianity confers on her humble disciples.

While in the light of the gospel and of eternity you view all men as brethren and equals, as joint sharers in the guilt and danger of sin, and in the provision and offer of saving mercy, you will extend the offices of brotherly and pastoral affection to all classes of

your people ; you will feel yourself a debtor to the poor and the ignorant, as well as to the more wealthy and refined. While you pay a suitable respect to the present improved state of society, and to the taste of elegant and literary characters, you will remember that the great object of the christian minister is not to please or to shine, but to make his hearers good and happy. To accomplish this effect upon such a vast assemblage of different subjects, as center in this capital, must demand the greatest exercise of wise and condescending fidelity ; it must require the alternate application of very different modes of instruction and persuasion ; it must call for a clear and powerful inculcation of all the important doctrines, precepts, and motives of our holy religion.

In defending the gospel against the attacks of infidelity, which in a place so populous and exposed are to be peculiarly expected, you will observe a happy medium between a timid or unbounded complaisance, and a rude unhallowed zeal. You will carefully aim, on every occasion, that both your doctrine, spirit, and deportment may be a constant recommendation and defence of christianity by exhibiting it in its native sweetness, sobriety, and dignity.

Among other weighty and encouraging incentives to this honorable and useful conduct, I might point your attention to that cloud of witnesses, to that glorious company of christian ministers, which distinguished the first and best days of the gospel. I might bring up to your view a train of respectable clergymen who have adorned, or still illuminate the churches

of this town. I might remind you of many excellent characters among the laity in this place, who are open and unshaken friends to primitive christianity, who reverse its doctrines, institutions, and morals, and sincerely honor the persons and ministrations of its faithful instructors. Above all, let me direct your eyes to the APOSTLE AND HIGH PRIEST OF OUR PROFESSION, CHRIST JESUS; who was faithful to his commission as the first public Teacher of the gospel amidst a series of unexampled discouragements; who experimentally knows the feelings and trials both of the man and the minister; and whose comforting voice to each of his upright and trembling servants is, **LO I AM WITH THEE ALWAYS: BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE.**

Under the smiles of this gracious Master may your fidelity and success realize the best hopes of your excellent Father and numerous friends, contribute eminently to the religious prosperity of this Society and Town, and at length be rewarded with superior glory in the kingdom of heaven.

My respected brethren of this church and congregation, we gratefully participate with you in the joy of this day. The amiable disposition, the intellectual and moral improvements of your Pastor elect have long recommended him to those, who have known both his earlier and maturer years. These accomplishments, joined with his knowledge of human nature and of christian divinity, form a happy presage of his future usefulness and honor as a gospel minis-

ter. At the same time his youthful age, his delicate sensibilities and his arduous employment solicit your candid and tender indulgence. You will therefore view both his private deportment and public performances with a generous eye. You will cherish his comfort and reputation. You will steadily and seriously attend his ministry. You will meekly receive and comply with his faithful admonitions. You will assist and encourage him by your affectionate prayers and correspondent endeavors. You will remember that neither you nor your children can expect any harvest either of present religious improvement or of future glory from the best seed of pastoral instruction, unless you devoutly concur with your minister. Attend, therefore, with earnest care to the moral and religious culture of your own hearts, and to the christian education and government of your houses. Diligently teach your children, both by doctrine and example, the reasonableness, importance, and happiness of experimental and practical christianity, the sacred and interesting nature of religious sentiments and institutions, particularly, of public worship and instruction on the day consecrated to our risen Lord, the great Author and Finisher of our faith. Let your practice bear an open testimony against that striking want of consistency and delicacy, of benevolence and piety, which marks too many characters at this day, especially in some of our more polite and wealthy Corporations: I refer to those who, while they affect a zealous care to introduce and maintain learned christian Instructors, yet treat their public

ministrations with uncivil and mortifying neglect. By this conduct they sanction and promote in the lower classes of society a contempt of those divine institutions, on which our present social interests, as well as final welfare, confessedly depend.

Excuse, my brethren, the honest but friendly tone of this address, and accept my best wishes and prayers for your temporal and everlasting felicity.

Fathers and Brethren of this great assembly,

If the gospel contain as we have heard, the words of truth and soberness, if it be the message of divine and everlasting salvation to our ruined race, how important is it that we all give it a welcome and obedient reception! How beautiful on the mountains of Zion are the feet of those who bring these good tidings! If the truth of the christian scheme were only probable or barely possible, we could not acquit ourselves from the charge of madness in treating it with cold or disdainful neglect. How unspeakably great, then, must be our obligation to believe and obey it when we have such various and satisfactory proof, both of its divinity and importance! By rejecting this provision of heavenly mercy we necessarily preclude ourselves from its infinite benefits, as well as incur the aggravated punishment, which such matchless folly, baseness and impiety demand.

But whether we co-operate with, or fight against this divine plan, it shall still go on, till it reach its destined consummation. The period is fast approaching, when christianity, stripped of every foreign

and disgraceful appendage, shall unveil her divine charms to an admiring world, and by her benign influence on the general character and condition of man shall give the most pleasing and irresistible evidence of her heavenly original. What benevolent and pious heart does not eagerly spring forward to this glorious Era, and contribute its best efforts and prayers to its speedy arrival? Above all, what sober mind can avoid anticipating, and with the most solicitous activity preparing for that FINAL DAY, when this great scheme of providence shall be finished; when the word of truth, which we now preach and hear, shall decide our endless fate; when, according to the awful description of our Apostle, THE LORD JESUS SHALL BE REVEALED FROM HEAVEN IN FLAMING FIRE, TO TAKE VENGEANCE ON THOSE WHO OBEY NOT HIS GOSPEL; WHO SHALL BE PUNISHED WITH EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION FROM HIS PRESENCE AND THE GLORY OF HIS POWER; WHEN HE SHALL COME TO BE GLORIFIED IN HIS SAINTS, AND ADMIRERD IN ALL THEM THAT BELIEVE.



THE
C H A R G E
BY THE
REV. SAMUEL KIRKLAND.

YOU have this day, my dear son, in a solemn and public manner, devoted yourself to the service of Christ in the ministry of his gospel; and by prayer and laying on of hands, you have been separated to this holy office.

The part assigned me in the solemn and affecting transactions of the day, is to remind you, whom I may now address, to the joy of the paternal breast, as my *fellow-laborer* in the gospel, of the important duties, sacred obligations and gracious promises, that pertain to the ministry which you have received of the Lord, and in his name to enforce them; in hope that the blessed Spirit will impress them, like indelible characters, on your heart and ours.

The keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed to you, as to one whom we judge faithful. Go thou therefore, and preach the gospel: teach in the Christian church; present the addresses of men to the Most High who heareth prayer; bless in the name of the Lord; administer the ordinances of the gospel; and introduce others as occasion may invite into the

ministerial office, ever keeping in mind the exhortation to "lay hands suddenly on no man."

Your pastoral care is to be more immediately exercised, and your ministerial labors more especially devoted to the church and religious society, who have called you to the important service; and whose call you have now accepted in the most public and solemn manner. By diligence and fidelity, exhibit to them incontestable evidence that you are willing to spend and to be spent, to promote their improvement and happiness.

In the course of your preaching, assert the being of the one living and true God; and display his perfections and glory, whose name alone is Jehovah. Declare the goodness and reasonableness of the divine law as the eternal rule of righteousness; man's original state of innocence; his present undone condition and entire moral depravity in consequence of the first apostacy; the righteousness of the divine sentence of condemnation on transgressors; the absolutely hopeless condition of men without a mediator. Labor to convince your hearers of their deplorable state by nature, that they may see and feel the necessity of an interest in the Savior; then point out to them this only remedy which God hath provided, the *Lord Jesus Christ*, in the dignity of his divine person and the unequalled excellencies of his mediatorial character: by the many and weighty arguments which the gospel furnishes, "compel them to come in" to the obedience of faith and acknowl-

edgment of the truth. Urge them from the consideration of the majesty of God ; his stupendous love in the gift of a Savior ; the great salvation and rich mercy, which he freely offers and as freely gives to all who are desirous of it. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, persuade them with bowels of tenderest pity to be reconciled to God.

Proclaim the purchase and descent of the Holy Ghost through the atonement, to sanctify the elect people of God : hold forth the nature and necessity of regeneration by the power and efficacious grace of God. Testify to sinners of every description repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ : in the whole of this matter study to approve yourself to God ; give to each his portion, strong meat to them, who are able to bear it ; but deal gently with the lambs and feeble of the flock, and herein imitate the condescension of the great and good shepherd.

Shun not to declare the whole counsel of God. Keep back nothing that will be profitable to your people. Teach the way of God *in truth* ; and call no man master on earth ; for one is your master, even Christ.

See that you faithfully administer the seals of the new covenant, baptism and the Lord's supper, to mete and proper subjects. Exercise the discipline of Christ's house, not as lording over God's heritage.

You are this day consecrated a bishop, an overseer, a steward in the house of God : it is required in

stewards that a man be found faithful. Let your eye
 therefore be singly directed to the glory of God and
 the best good of your people. Give yourself wholly
 to your work, that your profiting may appear in all.
 Let your time and talents henceforward be consecra-
 ted time and consecrated talents : Be an example of
 the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in
 spirit, in faith, in purity ; and no one will despise
 your youth. Flee whatsoever is unbecoming a chris-
 tian and a minister, that if it be possible you may ob-
 tain a good report of them also that are without.
 "Take heed to thyself and to thy doctrine ; for in
 so doing thou shalt both save thyself and them that
 hear thee." "Take heed to thyself." This is a fun-
 damental charge, which is firstly and constantly to be
 regarded. He is poorly qualified to lead others in
 the way of salvation, who is not experimentally and
 practically acquainted with it himself. But I hope
 better things of you, my son, though I thus speak.
 Yet what holy vigilance, and constant prayer, what
 humility and self-denial, ought you to exercise, lest
 that by any means, when you have preached to oth-
 ers, you yourself should be a cast away. If you are
 faithful in the discharge of your trust, you will deliv-
 er your own soul ; be pure from the blood of all men,
 and a sweet savor of Christ to God in them that per-
 ish, as well as in them that are saved : and then you
 may also comfortably hope for the divine blessing on
 your endeavors. O, my son, this is the warmest wish
 of your father's heart, that you may have many souls

as seals of your ministry, which shall be your glory, and joy, and crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus at his coming : You are a son of prayers and of vows : May God Almighty bless you ; “ and may you increase, whilst I decrease ; and shine many years as a bright star in the Redeemer’s hand, when I, your natural father, am set” and seen no more.

Finally, that you may attain the ends of your ministry and experience its blessed fruits in your own salvation and that of your people, we, who are your fathers in the gospel, by virtue of our office, do entreat and charge you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to take heed to the ministry, which you have received ; we beseech and charge you by the dear and glorious name of the ever blessed Jesus, to take care of the honor of his name in your ministrations : oh, never rob him of his glory, who is God-man, mediator ; never deny the Lord, who hath bought you. We beseech and charge you by the blood of Christ, by the mercies of the living God, by the invaluable worth of precious immortals, that you fulfil all your ministry ; and watch for souls as one that must give an account.

We charge you by the solemnities of this day, by the vows of God, which you have now taken upon you ; we charge you in the presence of those, who have called you to minister in holy things, in the presence of this whole assembly, and of the elect angels ; and finally, we charge you in the presence of almighty God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is committed all judgment, who hath eyes as a flame

of fire, and in the light of eternal glory will require at our hands what we have done with the gospel he gave us to preach, and what are become of the souls he committed to our care; we charge you to fulfil the work of your ministry, and by your present diligence, zeal and fidelity, prepare to give up your account with joy.

It is a strait and thorny road into which you have entered; as we your fathers in the ministry know by experience. You will find in it great difficulties and much opposition; and from a clear and impressive view of the magnitude of the trust, will be often led to cry out "who is sufficient for these things," and who can undertake the ministerial office without trembling? But remember that you serve the best of masters, whose strength is perfected in weakness; and are engaged in the best of works; a work, in which the eternal God, and his holy angels are constantly employed. Especially, for your support and consolation under the nameless difficulties and trials of your office, hear only one word from our ascended Lord, "Lo, I am with you:" Gracious promise! this is enough: this is all: you can ask no more. "Lo, I am with you, as a friend, a counsellor, a shield," a guardian.

Take courage then, my son. The master is kind, the cause is good, the conflict short, the crown glorious, and eternity long enough for rest. Yet a little while if thou continue faithful, and the joys of heaven will be poured into thy soul, in that blessed sentence, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

THE
RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP,

BY THE

REV. DR. BELKNAP.

BY this primitive, apostolic sign—We, the ministers of the gospel here present, receive and recognise you as our brother, our equal, and our fellow laborer in the kingdom and patience of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Are your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace? Are you ready to go through all the difficult duties of the ministerial office? Are you willing to be partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, and to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ?

Then, welcome, Brother, into the Lord's vineyard. Let your hands be filled with work and your heart with love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to these ~~the~~ which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Let your aim be to win souls. Let your deportment among your people be gentle, even as a nurse

cherisheth her children; and be so affectionately desirous of them as to be willing to impart to them not the gospel of God only, but your own soul, because they are dear to you.

As your brethren, we shall be always ready to afford you any assistance and relief, which you may need and we be able to impart; and in return, we shall expect the same from you as there may be occasion.

May the great Shepherd ever be your guide and his spirit your comforter. May you be supported by divine grace, in all your duties and all your trials; and may your services in the cause of religion meet with acceptance from God and man.

When you shall have finished your course of duty and of trial, and be called to give up your account, may you be able to do it with joy; and have the people of your charge for the seals of your ministry and for your crown of rejoicing, in the day of the Lord.

Brethren of this Church and Congregation,

As we have heretofore been partakers with you in your sorrows, we now rejoice in your consolation.

Our younger brother, who has devoted himself to the service of your souls, demands your candor and tenderness. From your prudence, your experience and your generosity, we doubt not that he will receive all that comfort and support which he may need; and by your profiting under his ministry, we trust, he will find, that his labor will not be in vain.

May the solemn transactions of this day be a source of pleasure and improvement to you and your children. May the peace of God which passeth all understanding keep your hearts ; and may the God of love and peace delight to dwell with you.

A M E N.



May the solemn translations of this day be a source
of pleasure and improvement to you and your chil-
dren. May the peace of God which passeth all un-
derstanding keep you **AB64** and may the God of
love and peace delight to dwell with you.

A M E N.



